Western Kentucky University
TopSCHOLAR®

Masters Theses & Specialist Projects | Graduate School

8-1991

The Interlanguage of Advanced Speakers: Implications & Suggestions

Madeline Garr
Western Kentucky University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses

 Part of the English Language and Literature Commons, International and Intercultural Communication Commons, Interpersonal and Small Group Communication Commons, and the Modern Languages Commons

Recommended Citation
Garr, Madeline, "The Interlanguage of Advanced Speakers: Implications & Suggestions" (1991). *Masters Theses & Specialist Projects.* Paper 2392.
https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/2392

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

Garr,

Madeline Bennett

1991

THE INTERLANGUAGE OF ADVANCED SPEAKERS: IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of English

by
Madeline Bennett Garr
August 1991

AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF THESIS

Permission is hereby

[X] granted to the Western Kentucky University Library to make, or allow to be made photocopies, microfilm or other copies of this thesis for appropriate research for scholarly purposes.

[ ] reserved to the author for the making of any copies of this thesis except for brief sections for research or scholarly purposes.

Signed: Madeline Bennett Gall

Date: July 29, 1991

Please place an "X" in the appropriate box.

This form will be filed with the original of the thesis and will control future use of the thesis.

WKU—Printing paid from state funds. KRS 57.375

THE INTERLANGUAGE OF ADVANCED ESL SPEAKERS:
IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Date 7/29/91

Recommended Lesa Dill

Joe Sunvant

Director of Thesis

Ronald D. Eckard

Date Approved_____

_____

Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the following people who were so supportive and encouraging through the weeks of writing and preparing this thesis:

Frances P. Clark without whose encouragement I would not have returned to graduate school.

Dr. Ron Eckard who patiently worked with me through all the stages of my study.

Tony Garr whose unrelenting patience and support kept me going

Megan and Anna Garr who continually encouraged "Mom's" going to school.

I thank you all.

Madeline B. Garr

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE INTERLANGUAGE OF ADVANCED ESL SPEAKERS: IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Madeline Bennett Garr August 1991 52 pages

Directed by: Dr. Ron Eckard, Dr. Joe Survant, and Dr. Lesa Dill

Department of English Western Kentucky University

This thesis details a study of the interlanguage of advanced speakers of English as a Second Language. The purpose of the study was to see what errors these students made when speaking the language in a communicative environment. In approaching the issue of interlanguage, the writer surveys the research in language acquisition as well as in interlanguage, error analysis and language learning theories. Based on this research and the results of this study, the writer explores the implications of both the research and the study and offers suggestions to teachers of advanced conversation classes.

INTRODUCTION

In teaching advanced conversation to students of English as a Second Language (ESL), the teacher is immediately confronted with the problem of how to deal with the students' errors in such a way that the students can develop an internal monitor, thus making the teacher superfluous. Moreover, the range of errors made by advanced conversation students is so vast that it is sometimes difficult for the teacher not to be overwhelmed by the errors and become trapped in a quagmire of trying to decide what, if, and when to correct. In this state of indecision the teacher is often left alone, trying to determine what is most important in the development of the language of these students and how to best help them out of the quicksand of linguistic and sociolinguistic errors in which they find themselves. This is an area of study in which a great deal of research has not been conducted; therefore, when I decided to write this thesis, I wanted to look at the errors that my advanced students make to see what, if any, conclusions could be drawn from the study. I hoped to see a pattern of error that could help me, as a teacher, determine how to best give them an opportunity to deal with the errors within the "safe" environment of the classroom.

This thesis explores several questions. Who are the advanced conversation students whom I wanted to study? What does research in language acquisition say about the problems of these students? What role do interlanguage, fossilization, and L1 interference play in the errors such

students make? What methods or techniques will aid a teacher in helping advanced conversation students become both linguistically and sociolinguistically competent? My purpose in conducting the study and in writing this thesis is to investigate the learning needs and the teaching demands of adult advanced speakers of English in an English environment.

The purpose of learning any language is communication, either oral or written. It is sometimes easier to keep this goal of communication in mind when teaching beginning students in a given language. Their inability to communicate is an ever-present need that challenges the teacher. However, assessing the needs of advanced students as well as teaching to those needs is much more difficult, since their ability to communicate is much better on the surface than that of beginners'. Yet, perhaps, even more than beginners, advanced students challenge us to meet their language needs in ways that, although not immediately obvious, may demand an incredible amount of pedagogical skill.

When looking at the needs of advanced speakers, one must assess their proficiency at a given point in time. This is a difficult task as is pointed out by Brown and Yale who state that "the assessment of the spoken language has traditionally been a headache for the English teacher" (Brown and Yale 1984). Naturally, students are all at different points since each language learner develops at his own pace. However, for the sake of organization, we can say that advanced students' grasp of grammar is usually quite good on paper while their oral control may not always be as good. They have usually mastered strategies of information gathering but know little to nothing about stating their opinion in culturally appropriate ways, evading unwanted questions, making apologies, or employing defensive strategies. They are

often culturally fatigued, tired of trying to make adjustments to a culture and its unwritten rules that they do not understand. Though living within the target culture, students often gravitate to members of their own culture, and, even when dealing with native speakers, they tend to assume roles and use nonverbal behavior appropriate to their own culture. Advanced conversation students are often in a twilight zone of language acquisition. They are caught between the darkness of having no language and the light of full communication effectiveness.

In the past seven years as a teacher of advanced conversation, I have constantly sought to meet these needs in a way in which the students can have the opportunity both to improve their language and to use to the fullest extent the language that they have acquired. However, a dearth of materials especially designed for this group of students makes the challenge particularly daunting. Although there are many exercises in many books that can be used in the advanced conversation classroom, no ONE method can be applied to the advanced student. In addition, some attention must be given to the students' errors since many of their errors are global, and they often interfere with communication, calling on the teacher not only to be a facilitator in the classroom but also a negotiator of meaning in the conversation.

The question then becomes how and in what way a teacher of advanced conversation can provide a safe environment for language acquisition to continue to take place. In what way can a teacher provide an atmosphere wherein the students will develop an awareness of their errors and as a result of this awareness be able to shake themselves free from the need of having a teacher in order to enter the target culture and develop in the target language ability? What mistakes can a teacher of advanced students

expect, and given those mistakes, what can she/he do to help them learn to hear and then correct those mistakes? Finally, what methods can the teacher use that will enable the students to relax and develop in the language so that they can achieve their own personal goals?

One of the most difficult issues that face the teacher of Advanced ESL Conversation is what to do about the errors. First, there has to be a determination of whether the error is truly an error or whether it may be a mistake. Then the teacher must judge when, what or whether to correct. Are the errors that a student makes truly important? Isn't communication the key? In his book The Glad River, Will Campbell states "talking is to make folks understand you. You can do it any way you want to" (Campbell 1982). In fact, this is not true. One's mistakes in speech can cause positive or negative judgments and, even if communication does take place, the end result may be rejection of the non-native speaker. Therefore, as teachers, we face the challenge of doing "something" about errors even if the "something" is no more than making the students aware that they are making errors.

CHAPTER ONE

A Review of the Research

The mystery of how a person learns a language has haunted researchers and educators alike since language learning began. This mystery has been the subject of a great deal of research in recent years; however, despite the theories of how and in what manner language is learned, the process of language learning itself remains.

Chomsky's linguistic studies in reaction to Skinner's behaviorist approach, especially Chomsky's review of Skinner's Verbal Behavior, has prompted a flurry of research in recent years. As a result of studies conducted by McNeil (1966, 1968), Bloom (1971, 1976, 1978), Slobin (1971), and others, language is no longer considered to be a reflexive response to a stimulus outside the child but rather an interactive and cooperative venture between the child and his environment. Chomsky believed that the structure of language is determined by the structure of the human mind and that this is an inherent characteristic of the human species. Although this particular belief is not original with Chomsky, the particular way that he approaches the problem is. Chomsky emphasizes the creativeness of human language. It is this creativity that accounts for the infinite number of sentences which can be produced in a given language. According to Chomsky, grammar generates all the sentences possible in a language whether they have been used or not (Chomsky 1965). It was Chomsky who coined the phrase "Language

Acquisition Device" and who sparked the research into the study of children's language acquisition. These studies of first language acquisition have led to further studies and to the applications of research to second language acquisition and teaching as well.

Perhaps the most important implication regarding first language acquisition to second language acquisition concerns the notion of competence and performance. For Chomsky, competence means the idealized form of the language, not characterized by such variables as memory limitations, distractions, errors, or hesitations. Performance or production is that language that is actually elucidated in the real world (Chomsky 1965). The connection between competence and performance in one's first language and one's second language is important when the notion of performance errors is considered and studied. Bailey, Madden and Krashen conducted a study that demonstrated that while adults might not achieve the level of performance achieved by first language learners or children learning ESL, adults still process language in a way similar to the way children acquire their first language (Bailey, Madsen and Krashen 1978). Dulay and Burt state that it is impossible to learn a second language without "goofing," stating that the goofs come where L1 and L2 rub. L1 organizes L2 speech and makes generalizations about its structure, creating goofs that are similar to those made by children learning the same language (Dulay and Burt 1974).

This consistent parallel between first language learning and second language learning is important. Yet the two are not the same process, nor is the acquisition of a second language by an adult the same as the acquisition of a second language by a child. Although parallels do exist, it is just as important to note the differences. All normal children learn a first language. This is not necessarily true for learning a second language. It has been

suggested that there is a critical period before puberty when acquiring a second language is an easier task, particularly pronunciation. However, since much of L2 learning is a cognitive task, there is also a great deal of research to suggest that adults learn at a faster rate in some aspects when provided input that increases their self-confidence and self-esteem while reducing their level of anxiety (Krashen, Scarcella and Long 1978).

Since this thesis is concerned with the idea of errors made by advanced conversation speakers who are adults, the necessity of looking at the issues of competence/performance, acquisition/learning, and errors/mistakes is of great importance. Krashen defines acquisition as the "subconscious process for developing ability in language via the language 'mental organ' requiring comprehensible input" (Krashen 1985). Learning, however, is defined by Krashen as the conscious process for developing ability in language, not using Chomsky's "mental organ" but rather utilizing other faculties of mind to produce language-like behavior (Krashen 1985). Krashen makes a distinction between acquisition and learning, stating that the former is a result of unconscious awareness of the rules that speakers possess where the latter is their conscious use of the rules, knowing them, and being able to talk about them (Fromkin and Rodman 1988). As for the final issue of errors, Brown defines them as individual variations in the interlanguage of a learner within which a learner is operating at the time. An error is a noticeable deviation reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. A mistake, on the other hand, is a random guess or a "slip," a failure to use the known system correctly (Brown 1980). In exploring the above issues, it is important to keep in mind that we do so to determine what practical application these issues have for the classroom teacher who must design and create opportunities for the student to learn a target language.

For a teacher seeking to create and design an effective progam a good place to start is with Stephen D. Krashen whose research in second language acquisition has led to numerous theories that in turn have given rise to methods used in the classroom. According to Krashen, language acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language in situations where the speakers are not concerned with the form of the their speech but rather with the message that they want to convey (Krashen 1985). In this way, second language acquisition can be much like first language acquisition in that the purpose of a child's speech is not to get the "grammar" correct but to communicate an important message. Just as the acquisition of a second language is similar to the acquisition of the first language, so too is the order of acquisition of grammatical structures in a second language similar to that in a first language (Krashen 1988). Unlike first language learning, though, often second language acquisition becomes second language learning. For Krashen, acquisition is far more important a process than is learning and, in fact, he states that formal language learning is not important in developing communicative ability (Krashen and Terrell 1983). This emphasis on communication relies on what he calls "comprehensible input" (Krashen 1985). The Input Hypothesis emphasizes that humans acquire language in one way: through hearing and reading language that is comprehensible. It is through comprehensible input that language learners understand, gradually organize language into comprehensible units, and eventually begin to speak (Krashen 1985). According to this theory, if input is understood, then language, including the grammar, will be acquired without the necessity of direct teaching (Krashen 1985). If direct teaching takes place, this comprehensible input should be selected by a teacher and should follow the Natural Order Hypothesis, which was first proposed for second language

acquisition by Corder in 1967. The Natural Order Hypothesis states that the rules of language are acquired in an organized fashion and do not necessarily follow the curricula that may be taught in a given language class (Krashen 1985).

However, for Krashen there is another equally important factor: the notion of an Affective Filter. The acquirer of the target language needs to be open to the input, and when the affective filter is high -- that is when the learner is anxious, homesick, lacking in self confidence, etc. -- then acquisition does not take place (Krashen 1985). On the other hand, if the acquirer is involved in the process of communicating, focussing on meaning rather than form, the filter is lowered and language acquisition occurs.

A third factor in Krashen's theory is the Monitor. Krashen defines the monitor as the ability to produce utterances from acquired competence. This is a function of language learning as opposed to language acquisition; therefore, students must be conscious of the correctness of their utterances and must know the rules in order to correct those utterance in which either errors or mistakes have occurred. According to Krashen, this process takes longer than acquisition and can actively disrupt communication (Krashen 1985). Therefore, use of the Monitor necessitates that performers have the time to monitor, be focused on the form or correctness of the utterance and know the rule in order to apply or use it (Krashen 1988).

Since use of the monitor varies from performer to performer, Krashen has divided this variation into three groups: the overuser, the underuser and the optimal user. Underusers, according to Krashen, do not seem interested in grammar at all. Their focus is on communication. They are totally unaware of the rules governing their utterances and are immune to error correction. Overusers use the Monitor constantly to the detriment of their

language acquisition. Here learners' Monitor use interferes with communication probably as much as their errors do. Finally, the optimal users use learning as a supplement to the acquisition process and monitor only when appropriate and when it does not interfere with communication (Krashen 1988).

Both Krashen's research and his theories have provided the field of language teaching with important and valuable insights as well as practical suggestions regarding the actual teaching of a language within a classroom situation. The development of the Natural Approach (Terrell and Krashen 1983) and its application in the classroom have liberated language learners from the rote repetition of audio-lingual drills or the deadly tedium of memorizing verb paradigms, methods that still haunt many classrooms. Yet much of what he says applies to beginning rather than to intermediate or advanced students. Although Krashen has provided valuable insights, some questions remain.

First, what constitutes comprehensible input? Who decides? What may be comprehensible to one student may also be totally incomprehensible to another. In the classroom situation, the arbitrator of comprehensible input is the teacher, but is he/she necessarily the best person to judge the comprehensibility of what is being presented? Furthermore, deciding what is comprehensible on a beginner's level is much different from deciding what may be comprehensible for advanced students. If we take comprehensible to mean that which is communicative, then the problem grows even more enormous and the challenge more vast.

Second, Krashen describes an ideal world. Even his definition of an optimal monitor user is ideal. Most students do not have the time to "acquire" a second language. In fact, putting them in a situation where only

acquisition takes place may significantly raise their affective filter. Many students in our classes are on strict time tables dictated by personal needs, university demands or economic and family obligations. They must learn English as quickly as possible. In addition, it is overly optimistic to assume that students will acquire the high level of grammar, vocabulary, and sociolinguistic rules that their language needs may require. All too often the language used about them is less than standard. In addition, acquiring the cognitive-academic language necessary to succeed in the university requires more than exposure to speakers of the target language. Several studies have been conducted assessing the academic and cognitive skills needed by students who attend a university. Yorio discusses this when he questions what to do with students who can communicate but who for academic reasons need to speak and write grammatically (Yorio 1985).

Finally, correctness of an utterance is an important issue. Whether we admit it or not, we judge people by the language they speak. People's innate ability to monitor their own language can place them into certain educational or social strata. This may be even more true for second language learners, particularly in this country. Although teachers should not be overly concerned with errors to the exclusion of communication, the reverse should also be true. It is a fact that one cannot communicate meaning without form. Fortunately, in recent years the focus in ESL pedagogy has shifted to communication and is no longer on the absolute correctness of each utterance (Savignon 1983). Grammar is no longer an end in itself but rather a means to the end of a communicative utterance. However, there is still a place for monitor use in learning a second language. The challenge for both the teacher and the researcher is to find ways to encourage this development of

the monitor so that the speaker can optimally use the monitor as Krashen has described.

Use of the monitor brings up the entire issue of errors. Just as there have been volumes of research devoted to first and second language acquisition, so too have there been volumes of research devoted to errors. During the Audiolingual period (1950's and 1960's), the attitude toward errors and mistakes was that they needed to be eliminated (Rivers 1964). Contrastive Analysis examined features that were different from the target language and predicted the errors that would occur (Bowen, Madsen and Hilferty 1982). Since the focus was language oriented, the emphasis was on eliminating the errors, once the teacher understood the source of the errors.

In the 1970's, this theory of error correction was replaced by the theory of error analysis, which examined why errors occurred rather than which errors occurred. The focus of error analysis was learner oriented, and studies were done to explain the kind of error that was made. The error analysis movement attempted to account for the learners' errors that could not be explained or predicted by contrastive analysis (Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982). Since the focus of error analysis was not so much on the language as on the learners, studying errors served two purposes: it provided data about which inferences could be made about the nature of language, and also it indicated to teachers and curriculum developers which part of the target language students may have trouble with and how this difficulty could prevent communication.

According to error analysis research, errors come from several sources. First, there are interlingual errors, that is, errors stemming from the native language itself. Often these errors manifest themselves in pronunciation mistakes, and probably it is here that the greatest amount of interlingual

interference occurs. Other types of errors are those that stem from the intralanguage within the target language itself. These kinds of errors are often known as developmental errors stemming from the hypothesis testing of the rules of a given grammar. According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen, most errors are not interlingual but are developmental (Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982). Third are errors made in reference to the sociolinguistic context of communication. These are errors that have more to do with the context in which something is communicated rather than the utterance itself. Fourth are errors that stem from different communication strategies used by the learner to communicate with a hearer. Some of these strategies are avoidance where the speaker tries to bypass the source of confusion, use of stock phrases without understanding the meaning of what he has said, the personality of the speaker influencing his/her speech, appeal to the nearest authority for either clarification or definition, and finally switching to his native language when all else fails (Brown 1980).

In addition to investigating why errors occur, Burt and Kiparsky conducted a study to determine the relative importance of the error that occurred. They found that errors could be divided into two types. Errors that affect overall sentence organization were called global because these errors significantly hindered communication. Errors that affected single elements in a sentence were called local since these errors did not significantly hinder communication (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen 1982).

This focus on errors, particularly on the intralingual errors so common in the language of the learner, promoted a new field of study. In 1974, Larry Selinker coined the phrase "interlanguage" to mean the separateness of a second language system that has an intermediate position between the native language and the target language being acquired (Selinker 1972). The second

language learner forms his own self-contained system. This takes place as a result of rule testing, a process in which the learner tries to organize and understand the grammar of the language he/she is learning. This process of rule testing gives rise to the interlanguage that learners acquire in an attempt to give order and structure to the linguistic input around them (Brown 1980).

The development of the interlanguage, then, is a process that can cease at any given moment. The cessation of this development results in the process of fossilization. Fossilization refers to

> the permanent cessation of interlanguage learning before the learner has attained target language norms at all levels of linguistic structure and in all discourse domains, in spite of the learner's positive ability, opportunity and motivation to learn and acculturate into the target society (Selinker and Lamendella 1978).

According to Selinker, this is one of the most interesting phenomena in interlanguage performance (Selinker 1974). There are three major reasons for the fossilization of rules, items or subsystems of the target language. If the fossilization is the result of the target language, then the reason is language transfer. If it is a result of identifiable items in the training procedure, i.e., faulty teaching or texts, then there is a "transfer of training" problem. Third, the fossilization could be a problem of second language strategies. Finally, the process of fossilization could be attributable to the overgeneralization of rules (Selinker 1974).

The entire issue of fossilization has raised even more controversy. Why does some students' language learning fossilize and others' does not? Selinker states that once learners determine that no more target language needs to be acquired for the communication necessary, then learning stops,

and it is at this point that fossilization occurs (Selinker 1978). Others hypothesize that the phenomena occurs as a result of other variables.

Terrell has formulated a communicative needs hypothesis which claims that communicative needs determine the level of attainment in the target language (Terrell 1987). Schumann discusses the social and psychological factors of fossilization when he states that several factors account for the phenomena. Social factors, meaning the dominance or the subordinance of a group in relation to the target language, can affect the acquisition process (Schumann 1978b). How well the two cultures have assimilated is also a factor. If a student is intent upon preserving his/her culture from assimilation into the culture of the target language, it is likely that the social distance will preclude the language learning (Schumann 1978b). Also the intended length of residence needs to be considered. The longer the intended length of stay, the more target language will be acquired (Schumann 1978b).

Just as important as social factors are the affective factors involved. Language shock, culture shock, motivation for learning the language and the permeability of the ego for the target language all contribute to the acquisition process. Schumann has named the effect of these factors "the pidginization hypothesis," which predicts that where social and psychological distance prevails, language that is below the standard norm persists in the speech of second language learners (Schumann 1978a). In a sense, this pidginization can be linked to interlanguage and fossilization in that a pidgin is a type of interlanguage that has been fossilized. The difference may be in the variability of interlanguage among the language learners themselves. Corder states that just as variability is the rule in human language, so too variability is the rule in language learner language (Corder 1978). According to Corder,

language learners do not speak the same interlanguage. Interlanguage itself is a dynamic system that develops in response to experienced communicative needs (Corder 1978). Language learners, according to their needs, may not learn at all, may choose to stop learning at a particular point in time, or may continue to acquire the language and become proficient on many levels. Interlanguage grammar, therefore, can fossilize at any point on the continuum whenever the learners judge that their language needs are met.

This view of interlanguage and fossilization coincides with Terrell's. According to Terrell, some fossilization always occurs before reaching native norms (Terrell 1987). In fact, Terrell argues that what some consider as irreversible fossilization may actually be plateaus that are followed by a surge of acquisition. Terrell states that the essential ingredient for perfect language acquisition seems to be perfect cultural and social assimilation, and since that is an ideal, perhaps teachers need to meet the students' communicative, social, and psychological needs rather than worry about high degrees of accuracy (Terrell 1987). For Terrell, target language group identification factors have more to do with fossilization than any instructional factor. Yorio disagrees with this view of fossilization, stating that students should be considered stabilized rather than fossilized (Yorio 1985). For Yorio, the question becomes what to do about students who may be stabilized and who for academic reasons need to speak and write grammatically (Yorio 1985).

The process of acquiring or of learning a second language then, is an involved cognitive, social and psychological process that is easily influenced by the presence or absence of a variety of factors. Second language learning for adults is particularly difficult since their identity has been established and they are not usually willing to give up their identity or their culture (Terrell

1987). This hesitation to fully identify with the target language or culture can create a situation where full acquisition will not take place due to the impenetrability of the learner's ego. To learn another language demands that one learn another culture as well; therefore, acquisition of a language necessitates a willingness to adapt to and perhaps adopt another culture.

Accordingly, efforts to teach the language based solely on an accuracy model will be fruitless since there is little recognition that the learners in the classroom are humans rather than machines. The affective filter hypothesis may be the most important result to come out of the literature and research. We as teachers must recognize that the students in our classrooms come to us with a variety of needs, hopes, dreams, and motivations. "Why" they are here goes far beyond the fact they want to learn language. If the "why" does not include their willingness to give up a little of their "self" in order to acquire the language, the teacher's job is over before it has begun.

All the literature states that it is useless to correct a student's errors. It has been found that correcting grammar produces little improvement (Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982). Despite the volumes written on language acquisition and the development of the monitor, there has been little written on how the teacher can develop such a monitor in the students. Granted, learning the rules begins the process but often the rule is learned but not applied. Is the error then a result of lack of competence or of a lack of performance? On first glance, one cannot tell. If one remembers that the purpose of language is to communicate, and if one recognizes that since local errors do not affect the meaning of an utterance and therefore do not interfere in communication, it may not be necessary to constantly correct third person errors or lack of articles. However, if one also realizes that global errors do seriously interfere with communication and can significantly hamper the

students' ability to express what they want or need to say, the question of error correction and what to do about the problem does arise, especially if the students need to be correct for academic purposes.

Advanced ESL students present an even greater problem. Although Krashen suggests a program that helps beginning students become intermediate students so that they can get input from the target language, the amount of research regarding advanced students is sadly lacking. Currently Krashen's suggestion to provide these students with books does not adequately address their cognitive, psychological, or affective needs nor does it answer the pedagogical question posed by the teachers of these students. Are books to be the only comprehensible input for these students? From which speakers will these students acquire their language? Zuengler states that while many interlanguage speakers do have target model alternatives from which they can acquire the language, the problem is that some of the variety adapted by the learners may not necessarily be standard (Zuengler 1987). Learners need to be shown that the language that they are using is less than acceptable on the academic or sociocultural level. Learners need a safe environment where they can "practice" what they have acquired and test their hypotheses about the target language. Learners need feedback from teachers as to whether the language they have adapted is acceptable in the world of "English" if they are to develop the internal monitor.

The development of the internal monitor should be the main goal of the teacher of advanced students. It is true that we do not want our classes to degenerate into an "accuracy first" program, but at some point in a given course, there needs to be an opportunity where the students can hear their mistakes and learn how to correct them. Similar to the basic rules governing production of a target language sound system, that is, if you can't hear the

sound, you can't produce the sound, advanced language learners need to hear themselves make the mistake. They need to become aware that what they have said is not acceptable either because communication has not occurred or because in the production of the utterance, what they have said is not what they meant at all.

This is not correction for the sake of correction, but in a sense it answers the challenge issued by Yorio who said that we must break down the barriers that many learners have built around themselves, accept how much they already know, and help them understand the fact that there is much that they do not know (Yorio 1985). To do this demands that we be sensitive and caring human beings who are in the classroom not just to teach a language but to provide a safe place where errors and mistakes are seen as learning opportunities on the road to acquisition (Moskowitz 1978).

CHAPTER TWO

A Study of the Interlanguage of Advanced ESL Students

Who are advanced speakers of the language? What special needs do such speakers have? In my personal experience, having taught these students for over seven years, I have found that advanced conversation students are as varied as snowflakes. Their needs are vast, no less than beginning students, just different. They come to us with varying degrees of vocabulary, structures, cultural experiences, and expectations. Their overwhelming need to communicate often conflicts with their weariness in trying to do so day by day. Often their language fatigue is manifested in cultural fatigue, their attempts at either the participatory or acculturation phase of cultural adjustment having been proved unsuccessful, tiring, or both.

When such students present themselves in a class, the teacher is confronted with a mammoth task. The variation of interlanguage in such a class is vast. The need for the students to learn how to communicate their ideas successfully is important. In addition is the need for the teacher to provide a safe, yet communicative, environment where the students can try, fail and succeed in communicating who they are.

I teach at the International English Institute, a private language school which was established in Nashville, TN, in 1978 to respond to the emerging need of a growing population of foreign students who wanted to come to this

country to attend a university. The goal of the institution is to take the students where they are, talk to them about their own personal goals and provide them with an opportunity to both acquire and learn language. I use "acquire" and "learn" advisedly. The students are encouraged to live with American families or in dormitories where they can interact with native speakers of English. These students are immersed into both the target language and the target culture. This increases the possibility that they will acquire and use English in meaningful communication. In addition to their living situation, the program demands a great deal of natural interaction between the students and the teaching staff. On the average, in addition to the usual time spent in the classroom, each teacher is expected to spend two hours a day in interaction with the students. Sometimes the interaction is based on academic needs, but often it is of a social nature. Additionally, there are functions each week that both teachers and students attend: holiday celebrations and dances, bowling, ice skating, picnics, movies, to name a few. At these times, with "safe" people, students are exposed to the language as it is used in everyday, negotiating activities.

The conversation curriculum at our institute is based on communicative functions, which are both thematic and situational. From Conversation One, which relies on a variation of TPR (Total Physical Response), to Conversation Five/Six, our highest level of conversation class, the emphasis is on real-life communication. These are not accuracy-based courses, although at certain levels accuracy is demanded. The thrust is communicative, and so students in Conversation One are taught enough vocabulary to deal with the basic survival needs of identification, greeting and leave-taking, expressing gratitude and lack of understanding, limited apologizing, and making excuses. They are also taught the vocabulary for

food, clothing, place, numbers, time, money, parts of the body, and the formulaics necessary to get through a normal day in the U.S. Although perfect performance is not necessary, to succeed on this level, the students must be able to repeat what has been said and respond in some way.

In Conversation Two the emphasis is on "how to" conversation, the students learn through role playing and real-life enactments in the community. The language is now on the sentence level. The students are provided with practice within the "safe" environment of the classroom before they go out into the "real world" to use their language. Again, the students must be able to respond to commands using the tenses with transformations and must be able to get into and out of survival situations with little or no help from a native speaker before they can advance to Conversation Three. Conversation Three moves away from TPR and works more with thematic topics such as fashion, news and sports in a free-conversation environment. The sentence is still the level of discourse, and questions and answers are emphasized. Accuracy is demanded on the form of the questions. On this level, too, the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) is taught and students are expected to produce the pronunciation of one thousand words from a common word list. Again, to advance to the next level, the students must be solid sentence-level participants who are able to communicate with comprehensible pronunciation and who are able to understand an American through negotiation for meaning.

In Conversation Four, the emphasis is on narration, description and explaining a process. The discourse work is at the paragraph level. Conversation management strategies are taught and the students are expected to tell, without being interrupted, stories using chronological order about their life and their dreams. The students are also expected to explain a process

and describe persons, places and things on a discourse level. Conversation Four constitutes a major leap both in fluency and in accuracy. As a result, to advance from our intermediate course to our advanced course, the students must be able to narrate, describe, and explain; they must have the ability to self correct, be able to get others to talk about themselves, be able to talk about their own interests and concerns and be an active participant in the conversation. In other words, before students are allowed in Conversation Five/Six, they must be doing most of the work in keeping a conversation going, and the teacher must be doing less.

In Conversation Five/Six the emphasis is on the following: stating an opinion, negotiating for a solution, agreeing and disagreeing in culturally appropriate ways, explaining a position, summarizing, paraphrasing, and persuading. None of these functions are taught directly. Instead, the students are put into situations where they are allowed to utilize these skills. The class is designed so that students have to plan a variety of activities such as commercials, talk shows, short vignettes or sit coms as a group. In order to do so successfully, the students must negotiate, communicate, opinonate, and participate in many types of communicative events. In reality, the students become so involved in what they are planning, they forget that they are in a conversation class and that they are speaking in English. During the class itself, the teacher makes little to no attempt to monitor the students' speech. The teacher acts as a helper, facilitator, friend and mentor. The role of the teacher is therefore more indirect and non-directive than the traditional model in many classrooms.

Students are admitted to the advanced conversation class using two criteria: by a spoken test or by having achieved the exit goals of Conversation Four. In order to keep our levels consistent, we try to keep the criteria

consistently applied. On admittance to our program, students are given a battery of placement tests. One of these tests is a spoken test that has two components and that is administered by two different teachers. One component consists of an oral interview in which the students tell us as much as they can about their educational and family background, their past experience with travel and language learning and their hopes and dreams of the future. The second component consists of the teacher individually telling the students a short story. The students are told before the story that they may interrupt at any time to ask for more information, ask a clarification question or express an inability to understand. At the same time, the students are told that after the story has been told, they will be asked to retell the story. This story has been especially designed to test the speaker's skill on all levels of the conversation curriculum. Since the story is an unfamiliar one, their use of strategies and what or how much they comprehend signals to the teacher on which level the students are. Both teachers score the student separately and a comparison is made at the end of the testing period. We score the students using descriptors that have been based on the P rating system used by the Foreign Service Institute and the Oral Proficiency Interview as well as our own descriptors keyed to our conversation curriculum.

To be in Conversation Five/Six students must have a full range of clarification, expansion, and conversation management strategies although they may still use these strategies in sociolinguistically inappropriate ways. They must understand all of the story and the solution at a native speaker's speed and be able to manage on their own the clarification of individual vocabulary items. They must be able to narrate, describe and explain a process well, although they may falter when asked to give reasons and solidly support their opinion. They must be fluent and take the responsibility of keeping the

conversation going by asking questions and contributing extra information. They must exhibit a wide vocabulary, use many synonyms and some paraphrasing. They may have much inappropriateness of choice both in terms of meaning and sociolinguistic use of words, but they are rarely incomprehensible. They must be speaking on a paragraph level with predominantly correct verb choices for narration and description so that confusion about time and aspect is absent. There should be only sporadic errors in the their basic structures, but they may have more frequent instability with structures that are infrequent, such as the conditional, the passive and the subjunctive (from Personal Interview Form, IEI Materials, copyright pending).

There are many techniques available that can teach the above skills. In the years I have been teaching advanced conversation, I seem to continually revise the course. In doing so, however, my goals remain the same. They are:

1. to challenge the students to use their language to deal with controversial/ complicated issues, learn how to opinionate, negotiate and agree and disagree in culturally appropriate ways;

2. to provide an opportunity for the students to monitor their language use as well as to evaluate and correct that usage;

3. to encourage the students to reach beyond their own cultural bias in order to understand both the cultures represented within the ESL classroom as well as the culture in which they find themselves;

4. to expose the students to current events and issues which impact their lives and the lives of those around them.

Throughout the years, my main concern with and criticism of most techniques I have used has been in the area of monitoring. Although I want

to teach the students to become aware of their mistakes, my goal in the classroom is a communicative one, and I strive to establish an atmosphere where students feel safe to express themselves. In an effort to give my students positive feedback and a supportive environment, I choose not to correct directly. If students do not understand each other in the midst of a conversation or in a group session, then I will often negotiate for meaning when asked or needed, thus providing indirect correction and indirect instruction. However, I still consider it necessary that students begin to develop their own internal monitors. As a result, through the years I have developed the practice of student conference times when we can sit together and talk about some pertinent issue either in the students' lives or in the world at large. These conferences provide wonderful opportunities for direct instruction on a person-to-person basis. In addition, they aid in lowering the affective factor: as we begin to know each other and as trust begins to build, students will become more eager to talk and perhaps acquire the language. Finally, since the students tape their conversation on the tape recorder and since, for the most part, the students choose what to tape and how long they want to talk, the students have a record of what we have said. This record is the core of developing the monitor. It is this record of what they have said and what I have said that forms the basis of the study I have done and the basis of the conclusions I have drawn regarding both the needs of advanced conversation students and the demanding job that the teachers of such students have.

I conducted the study on advanced students' interlanguage to determine what types of errors advanced conversation students made in a non-threatening communicative situations centering on a particular subject through which personal experience and opinion can be communicated. The

parameters of the study were similar to those which I have used for the last five years with one difference: students filled out a background sheet giving me as much information as possible concerning their educational and language backgrounds.

This study was conducted with two classes of advanced conversation students. They were placed into the class either because they had scored as a five speaker on the oral interview or because they had met the criteria of accomplishing the goals of Conversation Four as explained above. There were a total of twenty students in the population. Fifteen of these students were Japanese, one was Saudi Arabian, one was Venezuelan, one was Swiss whose language background was German, one was Sudanese, and one was Ethiopian. Five of the twenty students had been in the United States less than three months. Six had been here from four to six months. Five had been here from seven to nine months. Three had been here from ten to twelve months, and one had been here for more than a year. For seven of the students, this was their first trip to this country.

Of the twenty students, five of them had completed high school. Nine had completed two years of college or university. Four had completed three or four years of university, and two had done post-graduate work. Of the twenty students, six had attended an intensive language program before, two for less than a year and four for two years.

Thirteen of the twenty students had taken the TOEFL. Four did not report a score. From past experience, this means that the score was probably below 400 and the students did not wish to reveal such a low score. Six had received scores ranging between 400 and 449. Two reported scores ranging between 450 and 500. One student had received a score of more than 500. One student had taken the TOEIC and had received a score of 575.

Of the twenty students only two spoke English at home in their own country. Sixteen students spoke only their native language and English. Three spoke or read in a third language. One student had knowledge of three other languages aside from his native language and English.

Living arrangements during the study were also varied. One student lived alone. Nine students lived with American roommates or with American families. Ten students lived either with their family or with friends from their own language group.

As with everything else, their goals also differed. Nine students were at IEI in order to get into a university. For these students, passing the TOEFL was a primary concern and one that caused high anxiety levels. Eleven students, on the other hand, had as their goal improvement of their spoken ability so that they could get better jobs, usually in their own country.

Every week the students came to me individually with a tape. We would sit down and talk. I would ask the student a question or would have given them a topic on which they were to be prepared to talk. No student was allowed to read from a paper nor were they allowed to bring notes. In addition, since I interrupted them to ask personal questions about what they were saying, memorization of their response was useless. As we talked, our conversation was taped. At first, students were hesitant to talk, but after a while they forgot about the tape recorder. It was at this point that the conversation and the topic took hold and true communication would take place. The topics of the tapes were as follows:

Week One: Your Dream for Your Future
Week Two: The Value of Friendship
Week Three: What Makes You Angry?
Week Four: The Most Significant Experience in Your Life
Week Five: A Conversation with an American

After we had finished talking, the students took the tapes home and wrote down everything that they had said even if what they had said was "wrong." They also were instructed to write down what I had said. At that point, I asked them to try to correct anything that they saw as wrong. This was as much to build an awareness of the fact that they might have made an error as it was to prepare them for the follow-up interview. At this follow-up interview, I asked them to read aloud what they had said, and at certain intervals, I pointed out both local and global errors and discussed why the errors were made and how they could be corrected. After this was done, the students retaped the corrected version as a reinforcement of the correct forms or wording. Each student saw me for approximately twenty to thirty minutes once a week for an individual conference. The students seemed to enjoy this extra contact and I think this experience lowered their affective filter since they had private time to work on their own individual problems as well as the fact they had time to talk with me about problems unrelated to their language development, problems such as home stays, boyfriends or homesickness.

When I first started this study, I had formed expectations based on prior experience with advanced conversation students. I expected that there would be a significant number of verb tense problems, article usage problems, and preposition problems. I also expected that there would be a high number of word order problems, since according to many studies most interlanguage errors are a problem of word order rather than structure (Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982).

These expectations were partially substantiated by the study. The acquisition studies done by Dulay, Burt and Krashen and others demonstrate

an observable hierarchy of grammatical morphemes acquired by children and adults alike (Dulay, Burt, Krashen 1982). Although there is variability to account for individual differences, this order of acquisition seems to hold true for all second language learners. The hierarchy is as follows:

Group I

CASE
(Nominative/Accusative)

WORD ORDER
(in simple declarative sentences)

Group II

SINGULAR COPULA
('s/is)

PLURAL AUXILIARY
(are)

SINGULAR AUXILIARY
('s/is)

PROGRESSIVE
(-ing)

Group III

PAST IRREGULAR

POSSESSIVE
('s)

CONDITIONAL AUXILIARY
(would)

LONG PLURAL
(-es)

3rd PERSON SINGULAR
(-s)

Group IV

PERFECT AUXILIARY
(have)

PAST PARTICIPLE
(-en)

Since this is the hierarchy of acquisition, it would be expected that many of the errors that my advanced students made would not fall into these categories, with the possible exception of third-person singular and the perfect auxiliary and past participle usage. This proved true. The errors that the students made were errors one would expect to be made by advanced

speakers. The highest incidence of error fell in the following categories: pronoun usage, word choice, prepositions, articles, indirect speech and phrasing (cf. Appendix B). Since preposition usage, articles and indirect speech are acquired late, these categories of error were predictable. However, the categories that were the most interesting were those of word choice and phrasing.

In dividing the errors, I noticed that it was in the categories of word choice and phrasing that global errors were most likely to occur. Global errors as has been defined earlier in this paper are the type of error that causes communication to break down. When this type of error occurs, I as a teacher have to negotiate for meaning with the student. Although sometimes I would understand what was meant, either in the use of a wrong pronoun, wrong word form or choice or incorrect phrasing, many times I would be confused. In addition, I tried to keep in mind that "normal" Americans may have less patience with negotiating with a non-native speaker and give up rather than try to understand what may have been meant by the utterance. Such problems occurred with utterances such as:

"so always in the small things I think we should jump over it...;"
"if someone don't have friends the person will be pensive;"
"it was a very upset day;"
"I cooked ourselves;"
"when I have been broken;"
"I am going out of the good way;"
"When I am attempting against one of my principles;"
"Many people in Venezuela were horning their food;"

The above are only a small sample of errors that occurred in the oral conversation throughout the study. In each of the above sentences and in countless others, I had to stop the conversation and ask what the student

meant by a phrase or word. This stopping and asking for meaning signalled a breakdown in communication and an area in which the students needed further work.

Another reason for my study was to see if there was any significant improvement on the conscious level of the use of form without affecting fluency. In other words, I wanted to see if awareness of the error, brought about by direct correction after the dictation had been taken, would somehow influence future oral work. To my regret, I found no such correlation. Students continued to make the same errors although there was often an attempt to self-correct when they caught the error itself while they made it. Most of the time, the students were completely involved in the conversation, and were not focussed on the grammar of their utterance. However, there was an interesting change throughout the weeks of the study: the students began to correct more of their own errors as they took dictation of their conversation, particularly errors in pronoun usage, verb tense usage and subject/verb agreement. Although the number of errors, then, did not seem to be influenced by the corrections made, the students were more likely to correct the errors toward the end of the study than they were in the beginning of the study. Whether this showed increased competence is difficult to ascertain.

The frequency of certain types of errors seemed to vary with the topic. For example, when the student talked about what made them angry, the incidence of errors in the category of verb tenses numbered 89 as compared with 48, 48, and 40 in weeks 1, 2, and 4. Only in week five when the topic was reporting on a conversation they had had with an American, did the incidence increase to 76. Again, when the students shared their dreams about the future in the first week, their use of the conditional was higher than in

the following weeks. However, surprisingly, there were fewer errors in their use of the conditional than I had expected, which could signal that they either avoided using the structure or that the subject matter did not provide enough opportunity for them to use the conditional. Use of both the infinitive/gerund forms and modals elicited a great many errors. For both categories, numbers fell in week Three but were high in weeks One, Two, Four and Five. Subordination problems were significantly higher in weeks One and Three and about the same in Weeks Two, Four and Five. Again this could signal that the topic did not lend itself to use of subordination or that students avoided the structure altogether.

There was much individual variation in the students' spoken discourse as well. This individual variation supports the theory that there is a variety of interlanguages developing within a single classroom and that no one student is at the same level of proficiency at the same time. Additionally, the presence of so much variation is indicative of the creativity of interlanguage itself. Students tried to communicate their experience and opinions during the weeks of the study using what language they had in order to do so. The individual variation, methods of circumlocution in order to get their ideas across, and avoidance of vocabulary items or structures they were unsure of all contribute to the interlanguage development of this particular group of students.

If we take the view that errors are part of the developmental process of learning a language, that they are in fact an interactive activity between the learner and the language itself as well as those who speak it, then most of the errors that emerged throughout the conversation were errors that were developmental. In a learning environment these errors can be brought to the attention of the students through awareness techniques such as the one used

in this study, and the students then have the opportunity to use the monitor in order to self-correct. If the errors can be corrected by the students, then they are not errors but rather mistakes. The students have the competence to self-correct and are able to do so. If, on the other hand, the errors cannot be corrected by the students, then the competence is not there and the students have a gap in their language knowledge. At this point, the teacher can provide the necessary instruction to explain the errors and help the students correct them. Whether this instruction will create linguistic competence in the students is questionable. Although competence is acquired through exposure to the language, it is debatable whether direct instruction will necessarily lead to competence.

Whether or not fossilization had occurred with these students is also questionable. Looking at the reasons that fossilization occurs, as explained by both Selinker and Schumann, I believe it was likely that once these students had reached their own personal goals for learning the language, acquisition would have ceased and fossilization would have set in. A year later, although a few of the students actually did achieve their needed TOEFL score and were admitted to American universities, an even greater number returned home. As a result, I predict that unless they were able to use the language they had already acquired before their return, their English would probably fossilize on the level they attained when they had reached their needed goal.

In conclusion, the study I conducted supported several current theories regarding language acquisition and language learning; at the same time, it also posed more questions for the language teacher. There is an order of acquisition which is reflected in the study, and the fact that the students made few to almost no errors that would fall into the acquisition taxonomy

demonstrates that they are intermediate to advanced acquirers/learners rather than beginners. Also, the types of errors that had the highest incidence were errors relating to the choice of words or phrases to communicate what they wanted to say. These errors for the most part were global since they necessitated negotiation for meaning on the part of the teacher and the student. Grammatical errors in the study fell into the category of late acquired items such as articles, indirect speech, subordination, modals and conditionals. At times, the students had the ability to correct these errors from their competence in the language. At other times, the teacher had to explain the grammatical construction in the hope that competence would be learned/acquired. The developmental errors were evidence of the interlanguages spoken by the students in this group. The variety of errors only supported the theory that although there is similarity in the acquisition hierarchy, each student develops his interlanguage separately. Whether a student's interlanguage would fossilize goes beyond the scope of the study, but given the reality of the achievement of the students this past year, it would be safe to agree with the researchers that fossilization would occur with those students who returned to their country and for whom further exposure to English would be limited. The question of whether a student would learn to monitor his own language in oral production after having seen the mistakes he or she made was not fully answered. Five weeks of tapes and error counseling made no significant difference in the oral production of error; however, as the study progressed, there was some movement toward correcting the error on their own once the students had taken down the dictation of the tape. Further studies in this area over a longer period of time with students whose movement is not so fluid would be helpful. Finally, the study raises several issues for the teacher of a second

language, issues regarding how to teach advanced student, what to emphasize, what to ignore, and how to create for them the environment where both acquisition and learning can take place in a safe zone. This will be covered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Implications and Suggestions

The purpose of any language is communication. Historically, when a language becomes ineffectual, then it is either changed or it dies. The purpose of learning a language then is to communicate orally, through writing, or both. Keeping this communicative purpose in mind, though, is somehow a challenge to many language teachers. We get caught up in the "how" to teach, often forgetting the "why" we are teaching. Perhaps that is one reason we are always grabbing at new ideas and new methods, hoping that this will answer the ever present need for the "right" way to teach. This search for the "right" way is a two-edged sword for although it encourages researchers and teachers alike to look for better methods based on solid research, it often creates monsters that jump out of closets. So teachers swear either by the Audiolingual method or the Silent Way. Classroom wars are fought over the Counseling Learning approach or Notional Functional syllabus. Arguments swirl around the Natural Approach, TPR, Suggestopoedia, Cooperative Learning or the Communicative syllabus. Through it all our students sit, sometimes benefitting from our new ideas, often just confused (Clarke 1982; 1984).

Although all these methods or approaches are valid, many of these same approaches deal primarily with the initial stages of language learning. For teachers who are faced with the challenge of the intermediate and

advanced stages of language learning, the options are not as varied nor are they as clear cut. As a result, teachers are often at a loss as they try to decide which materials can best help them create an environment of acquisition in a learning situation. In other words, while authors and publishers develop a wealth of methods and materials for beginning students, they often ignore the needs of intermediate or advanced students, making it difficult for teachers to provide these students with opportunities to acquire or learn the language.

As evidenced by the study that I conducted, the variety of advanced students' needs is vast. Although these students have one underlying purpose for being in the language classroom, their personal goals, background education, past language training and present motivation all differ. Just as their goals are varied, so too is their interlanguage or language development. As a result, the teacher must deal not only with the reality of their interlanguage but also with why the interlanguage is so strongly in place. Is it a result of fossilization, developmental error, or pidginization? Can it be corrected, modified, monitored or changed? Does it interfere with communication on a global level or is it merely a local error that may or may not warrant correction? Do the errors reflect a lack of competence or merely a lack of performance? Are the errors interlingual, intralingual or motivational? Answering these questions may be impossible and yet answering them, at least partially, may be necessary if a teacher is to prove effective.

The literature continually stresses that the teacher is the single most significant model in the acquisition or learning of a language (Stevick 1980). I believe this is because the teacher is the one who can most crucially influence the affective filter, either by creating a safe environment where language

learners can experiment and test the language that they hear around them or by limiting, in some way, the students' ability by creating an environment that is too much accuracy based and subject to critical evaluation. Although the latter is certainly a part of most language learning programs, particularly those programs that are established to help the students become academically proficient, it is important to realize that if that is the main focus of the program and of the classroom experience, it is likely that acquisition of the language will not take place. Although the role of the teacher as the most significant model of the target language is readily recognized in beginning classes, it is less frequently acknowledged as crucial in the advanced language learning class.

Since the students in this class have a wealth of target language and target culture experience from which to operate, often advanced students come to us culturally fatigued or language tired. Because they are able to negotiate meaning in successful ways outside the classroom, they often think that the class is not necessary since they already know how to "talk." These attitude factors play a significant role in whether learning/acquisition has stopped and fossilization has set in. Only when students see that what happens in the classroom can enhance their own experience out in the real world, only when students see that the teacher really cares about them and about what they may want to say can true acquisition and/or learning occur.

The teacher, then, acts more as a facilitator and a friend in an advanced conversation class than as an instructor. In this relationship of equals, the affective filter can begin to break down, and students are more able to truly receive comprehensible input. In order to determine what is true comprehensible input on this level, the teacher must know the students. In this way he/she can design the class to meet the students' personal needs and

interests. If the teacher does not do this, students often perceive that the subject matter is irrelevant. As a result of this perception, the affective filter is raised, guaranteeing that neither acquisition nor learning will take place.

Norrish states that in trying to learn the reasons for errors, it is important to distinguish the difference between teaching and learning (Norrish 1983). As Norrish points out, what the teacher teaches is not necessarily what the students learn. As a result, it is difficult for teachers to determine if what they have chosen as comprehensible is necessarily comprehensible to the students in the class. Again the teachers must be aware of the students' needs. This is not to say that the teacher should necessarily design courses around the whims of the students. However, knowing the students' attitudes, particularly when those attitudes are negative ones, is absolutely necessary if teachers are to help students achieve their language learning goals.

Therefore, lowering the affective filter may be the single most important task a teacher has in the language classroom. Second to that, providing a cultural model with which students can readily identify is also important. Schumann states that how closely students identify with the target language and culture will determine how much or how little of the language they will learn (Schumann 1978b). The teacher often constitutes the students' first real experience with this target culture, even on the advanced level.

However, given all the above factors, language learners will still make errors; their language will not be perfect. Fortunately, the various methods and approaches that are in favor today are those that demand tolerance for error. Error is now seen as part of learning a language and should be looked upon with interest rather than censure. Advanced speakers and their errors,

then, are opportunities for learning rather than opportunities for correction. Given the fact that error correction makes no significant difference anyway (Krashen 1988), this newly found tolerance, based on modern cognitive theories, frees the teacher to provide opportunities for communication rather than to worry constantly as to whether the student is producing a correct response. The question of whether the practice of an error will fossilize the error is still an area of concern, but thus far the research does not indicate that the student necessarily either hears his own errors or the errors of others as input (Long and Porter 1985; Porter 1986). More research on this issue is necessary.

How then can one design a good language curriculum for advanced conversation students, a language curriculum that is both a source of acquisition and a source for learning? In addition, can both learning and acquisition take place in the same classroom and can they take place in a classroom of advanced speakers?

First, both acquisition and learning are possible in the classroom and not only for beginning students. Krashen suggested at the Southeast regional TESOL conference in October 1989 that a good language program is one that teaches beginners, provides some support for intermediate students and then lets the more advanced students enter content-based instruction. While beginners need to be in a controlled situation, since the presence of the target language around them will not necessarily be comprehensible input, it is not necessarily true that intermediate or advanced students are ready for content-based instruction, particularly if they are adults. Krashen states that language classes alone cannot produce intermediate students. According to Krashen, even if a program uses TPR, the Natural Approach or Suggestopoedia, the program will not produce intermediate speakers.

However, just what is an intermediate student? Krashen's definition of intermediate students is those students who are good enough to get input from the mainstream community. The American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language (ACTFL) definition of intermediate students is more elaborate. They are characterized by their ability to:

> create with the language by combining and recombining learned elements, though primarily in a reactive mode;
>
> initiate, minimally sustain, and close in a simple way basic communicative tasks;
>
> ask and answer questions; (ETS 1982).

Are intermediate students ready to plunge into sheltered subject matter teaching as Krashen suggests, and is this a feasible approach, given the demands of TOEFL required scores from universities? Even by definition, it is questionable that advanced students would feel successful in the sheltered language classes since so much of content based instruction hinges on vocabulary, and this seems to be one of the most difficult areas for advanced students, as evidenced by my study. According to the ACTFL description, advanced students:

> converse in a clearly participatory fashion;
>
> initiate, sustain and brings to closure a wide variety of communicative tasks, including those that require an increased ability to convey meaning with diverse language strategies due to a complication or an unforeseen turn of events;
>
> satisfy the requirements of a school and work situations;
>
> narrate and describe with paragraph-length discourse; (ETS 1982).

Unlike Krashen, I believe that a language learning-centered class is still a viable option for both intermediate and advanced students. Yet the language class, particularly for advanced students, must be one that offers a variety of comprehensible input using real world language so that the students will be exposed to the language in a manner from which they can learn. In other words, in order for advanced students to acquire language in a learning situation, it is important to provide the students with opportunities in which they can grow in their communicative competence.

The challenge then is to provide a safe place in an advanced conversation class for students to practice their language and a safe place to make mistakes and learn from them. One way that this can be effected is through the use of role play. According to Scarcella, language acquisition evolves out of learning how to participate in a conversation. Language students first learn communication strategies and then how to interact verbally. Through this constant interaction, they improve their ability to create grammatical sentences as well as improve their ability to be sociolinguistically competent (Scarcella 1978). In my own experience, I have found that placing students in small groups where the task is totally separate from a language task, such as trying to create a commercial or trying to write a sit com, creates these opportunities wherein the students are able to interact and communicate about the task at hand. These opportunities provide the students with what Yorio calls "realistic situations from which necessary awareness and experience will grow and develop into native-like competence" (Yorio 1980). Taylor also discusses this type of approach. In his view, teachers must create opportunities for students to share unknown information by using it:

> Language is best acquired when not studied in a direct, explicit way. It is acquired most effectively when used as a vehicle for doing something else. When I am involved in accomplishing X via language, I therefore have a personal interest (Taylor 1983).

This statement emphasizes the importance of this type of approach and underlies the necessity for implementing this approach in the advanced conversation class as a way to make the learning more meaningful and motivational. In addition, approaching the language class from this perspective in a sense is a compromise between Krashen's suggestion to place students in sheltered learning classes and the traditional approach of not thrusting them into a situation until they are ready. The language and the situational tasks presented to the students daily in a advanced conversation class should be in touch with the real world. Di Pietro states that if this is so, neither the students nor the teachers will lose sight of why the language is being learned, i.e., to deal with the real world through communication (Di Pietro 1981).

By exposing advanced students to the real world of language through speakers, movies, video tapes, and by providing an opportunity for the students to analyze and understand what has been said, the teacher answers one of the most important needs that advanced students have in the development of their language -- that of phrasing. In the study I conducted I pointed out that much of what the students say is not grammatically wrong but either semantically wrong, lexically wrong or wrong in their phraseology. In other words, a native speaker would never say it because it "doesn't sound right." How can we as teachers teach the infinity of our language? The simple answer is that we cannot (Corder 1974). But we can provide in a controlled environment, a way for advanced students to begin to notice the

differences just as we provide for beginners a way to hear the language that surrounds them. Corder says it so well when he states that we can only create conditions in which a language "will develop in the mind in its own way" (Corder 1974). In these conditions, in this controlled environment, we can introduce the way we really talk, in true life, so that the students can begin to distinguish how their language differs from what is being said by native speakers. By using real life or "authentic" material, the teacher is also able to teach the sociolinguistic rules that accompany a language and a culture. These rules involve the use of intonation, touching, facial expressions, timing, laughter, movement and levels of words that are appropriate or inappropriate at given times and that are best taught within the context of real life communicative situations.

The emphasis, then, in the advanced classroom should continue to be on communicative competence combined with activities that can elevate the awareness of advanced speakers so that they can measure their language ability against that which they hear in the language world around them. The students can focus their elevated awareness on the grammatical, semantic, lexical and sociolinguistic items of the language. In this way, the students can be challenged, gently , and with great understanding, to examine what they are doing , and why they are doing it. Di Pietro states that "language is the strategic interplay of roles that function to fulfill personal agendas through each repeated encounter in the target language" (Di Pietro 1987). Through this interplay, the students begin to create a "self" in the target language. Students in an advanced conversation class must be given the opportunity to consciously create this new "self," that will operate in not only a target language but also a target culture. This emerging new self will need the

confidence that only a safe environment and a caring teacher can provide so that the students can accomplish this task.

In providing the students with this environment, teachers must adjust their goals. We are no longer turning out performers, but rather speakers. Our classrooms are not assembly lines but rather growth opportunities. Our goal is not perfect native speech but individual ability to communicate "self" with a speaker of another language. In the end, if we as teachers can make these adjustments, taking what is best from the past, using well what is being discovered in present-day research about first and second language acquisition, avoiding the pit-falls of "one way" methodologies, eclectically choosing the best from the textbooks and not falling into the trap of teaching the same thing, year after year, if we as teachers can be secure enough not to take ourselves too seriously and have sufficient wisdom to take ourselves seriously enough, then somehow, our students will find within themselves the ability to do the same. Our language classrooms will be a blend of what is best in our field with what is best in our world. The result will be that we will all be talking in order to make others understand us.

LEVEL	STRATEGIES	COMPREHENSION	FUNCTIONS	FLUENCY	VOCABULARY	GRAMMAR
1	Blank stare; eye contact; may laugh, echo; or shake head and say, "No"	Little or none; only isolated words	Echoing; may give single word answers to basic questions; may speak in native language	No fluency; usually cannot even repeat phrases or sentences; very hesitant	Little or none	No grammar; no sentence level constructions
2	May or may not have eye contact; echoing; expresses lack of comprehension; strategies usually not correctly used; very hesitant about using strategies; gives up easily	Basic notions with repetition, reduced speed, and mime but cannot understand the whole description or narration	Answers yes/no questions, alternative questions and simple information questions about basic identifying information; can mimic	Hesitant-- usually single word responses to interviewers questions; does not initiate - responds only; burden of the conversation on the interviewer; pauses, false starts; some native language	Basic-- usually limited to vocabulary used initially by interviewer	None-- or may attempt sentence level responses but does not have structure and jumps from content word to content word or uses formulaics; much incomprehensibility due to grammar
3	Limited strategies usually very basic formulaics and incorrectly phrased; very hesitant about using them and gives up easily; limited expansion strategies; demonstrates some desire to take control of lack of comprehension	Understands description and situation with some clarification; doesn't understand the solution and the logic behind it	Attempts narration and description but cannot put it all together because of grammar and vocabulary; can question and answer but limited range of questions; answers are predominantly factual; can handle basic survival situations with no complications	Seems eager to talk but has hesitations, false starts; asks for help; self-corrects	Basic vocabulary usually confined to that used in the story and to high-frequency general words; attempts at learning new vocabulary during story	Sentence level constructions with some degree of accuracy but much interlanguage instability; at least an embryonic sense of time past, present, future with different forms of verbs seen; comprehensible to sympathetic native speaker
4	Full range of clarification strategies; many expansion strategies; few if any conversational management strategies; not hesitant to use strategies; some incorrectness but not usually incomprehensible	Understands or thinks he/she understands all of the story, solution, and the logic with self-management of lack of comprehension; understanding is "negotiated."	"Real" participant in a two-way conversation; full participant in question and answer conversation with clarification and expansion questions; attempts narration, description, explaining a process	Not hesitant to take control of clarification and understanding; some hesitancy in answers generally managed with hesitation devices or expression of lack of ability or difficulty of task	Vocabulary adequate for the story; some synonyms seems to 'catch' some words in the course of story telling and attempts to use them	Sentence level constructions; evidence of sense of time, but weak verb structure; attempts paragraph level structure but much instability; demonstrates need to work on form and accuracy
5	Full range of clarification, expansion, and conversational management strategies; some sociolinguistic inappropriateness	Understands all of story and solution at native speaker speed; self-management of clarification of individual vocabulary items; restatement for memory; may make comments anticipating the ending	Can narrate, describe, and explain a process well; breaks down at giving reasons and solidly supporting an opinion	Fluent; keeps the conversation going by contributing extra information and asking return questions	Wide vocabulary; uses many synonyms and paraphrasing; much inappropriateness of choice both in terms of meaning and sociolinguistic constraints but never incomprehensible	"Paragraph" level speaking with predominantly correct verb choices for narration, description so that confusion about time and aspect is absent. Only sporadic errors in basic structures; more frequent instability in low frequency structures; difficulty with conditionals and subjunctive
6	Full range of clarification, expansion, and conversational management strategies; sociolinguistically appropriate	Understands all details at native speaker speed; manages any clarification like a native speaker	Can give and support opinions; some problems with summarizing, paraphrasing, negotiating, and persuading	Lacks some sociolinguistic competence to handle situations involving the functions with native speakers	Sophisticated; wide vocabulary with some inappropriateness of choice	Native-like; some inappropriate choices which do not cause lack of comprehension; some interlanguage instability; no patterns of error
Grad	Native-like	Native-like	Native-like	Native-like	Native-like	Native-like

COMMENTS ON PRONUNCIATION:

Pronunciation judged as follows:

A Level -- Incomprehensible or largely incomprehensible
B Level -- Foreign with some incomprehensibility
C Level -- Foreign but easily comprehensible
D Level -- Native like

(Cannot go above 4 unless C or D)

APPENDIX B

TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS PER TAPE FOR ALL STUDENTS

Error Type	Tape 1	Tape 2	Tape 3	Tape 4	Tape 5
pronoun	12	35	33	37	13
verb tense/form	48	48	89	40	76
word order	2	5	8	5	3
infinitive/gerund	22	17	6	24	22
word choice	85	78	52	68	56
preposition	68	43	46	36	44
conjunction	16	12	12	12	9
subordination	15	5	12	6	6
conditionals	7	4	2	4	4
modals	16	14	7	13	13
negatives	3	3	4	1	0
articles	69	29	38	44	40
subject/verb agree	10	8	6	13	3
comparatives	7	7	7	3	7
phrasal verbs	0	0	3	1	3
phrasal adjectives	1	0	4	1	2
active/passive	1	1	0	0	0
count/noncount	1	1	1	1	1

Error Type	Tape 1	Tape 2	Tape 3	Tape 4	Tape 5
determiner c/nc	5	2	0	2	1
so/too/very	6	1	3	4	4
verb missing	8	9	6	7	4
singular/plural	4	10	4	11	5
indirect speech	**4**	**13**	**25**	**10**	**4**
subject missing/extra	22	13	6	8	9
phrasing	**26**	**18**	**16**	**24**	**23**
slang use	0	3	4	2	1
proposal verbs	0	1	0	1	0
time words	8	9	9	9	2

WORKS CITED

Bailey, Nathalie, Carolyn Madden and Stephen D. Krashen. 1978. Is There a 'Natural Sequence' in Adult Second Language Learning? In Second Language Acquisition. Ed. Evelyn Marcussen Hatch, 362-370. Newbury House: Rowley, MA.

Bowen, J. Donald, Harold Madsen and Ann Hilferty. 1985. TESOL: Techniques and Procedures. Newbury House: Cambridge, MA.

Brown, Gillian and George Yale. 1982. Teaching the Spoken Language. Cambridge University Press.

Brown, H. Douglas. 1980. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Campbell, Will. 1982. The Glad River. Rinehart, Holt & Winston. New York, NY.

Chomsky, Noam. 1965. Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. M.I.T. Press: Cambridge, MA.

Clarke, Mark. 1982. On Bandwagons, Tyranny and Common Sense. TESOL Quarterly 16: 437-448.

_____. 1984. On the Nature of Technique: What do We Owe the Gurus? TESOL Quarterly 18: 577-594.

Corder, S. P. 1974. The Significance of Learners' Errors. In Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition. Ed. Jack C. Richards, 19-27. Longman: London.

_____. 1978. Language Learner Language. In Understanding Second and Foreign Language Learning: Issues and Approaches. Ed. Jack C. Richards, 71-93. Newbury House: Rowley, MA.

Dulay, Heidi C. and Marina K. Burt. 1974. You Can't Learn Without Goofing. In Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition. Ed. Jack C. Richards. 95-123. Longman: London.

Dulay, Heidi C., Marina Burt and Stephen D. Krashen. 1982. Language 2.

Oxford University Press: New York.

Fromkin, Victoria and Robert Rodman. 1988. An Introduction to Language. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, INC: New York.

Krashen, Stephen D., Robin C. Scarcella and Michael H. Long, ed. 1982. Child-Adult Differences in Second Language Acquisition. Newbury: Rowley, MA.

Krashen, Stephen D. and Tracy D. Terrell. 1983. The Natural Approach. Alemany Press: Haywood, CA.

Krashen, Stephen D. 1985. The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications. Longman: New York.

_____. 1988. Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning. Prentice Hall: New York.

Long, Michael H. and Patricia A. Porter. 1985. Group Work, Interlanguage Talk and Second Language Acquisition. TESOL Quarterly 19: 207-228.

Moskowitz, Gertrude. 1978. Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Classroom. Newbury House: Rowley, MA.

Norrish, John. 1983. Language Learners and Their Errors. Macmillian: London.

Porter, Patricia A. 1986. How Learners Talk to Each Other: Input and Interaction in Task-Centered Discussions. In Talking to Learn: Conversations in Second Language Acquisition. Ed. Richard R. Day, 200-222. Newbury House: Rowley, MA.

Rivers, Wilga. 1964. The Psychologist and the Foreign-Language Teacher. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Savignon, Sandra. 1983. Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice. Addison-Wesley: Reading, MA.

Scarcella, Robin C. 1978. Socio-drama for Social Interaction. TESOL Quarterly 12: 41-47.

Schumann, J. H. 1978. Second Language Acquisition: The Pidginization Hypothesis. In Second Language Acquisition: A Book of Readings. Ed. Evelyn Marcussen Hatch, 256-271. Newbury House: Rowley, MA.

_____. 1978. Social and Psychological Factors in Second Language Acquisition. In Understanding Second and Foreign Language Learning: Issues and Approaches. Ed. Jack C. Richards, 163-178. Newbury House: Rowley, MA.

Selinker, Larry. 1974. Interlanguage. In Error Analysis: Perspectives in Second Language Acquisition. Ed. Jack C. Richards, 30-54. Longman: London.

Selinker, Larry and John T. Lamendella. 1978. Two Perspectives on Fossilization in Interlanguage Learning. In The Interlanguage Studies Bulletin 3: 143-191.

Stevick, Earl. 1980. A Way and Ways. Newbury House: Rowley, MA.

Taylor, Barry D. 1983. Teaching ESL: Incorporating a Communicative Student-Centered Component. TESOL Quarterly 17: 69-87.

Terrell, David Tracy. 1986. Avoiding Fossilization in Communicative Approaches. DLI 4: 1-21.

Yorio, Carlos A. 1980. Conventionalized Language Forms and the Development of Communicative Competence. TESOL Quarterly 14: 433-442.

_____. 1985. Fossilization. A paper presented at the Applied Linguistics Winter Conference. New York.

Zuengler, Jane. 1987. Identity and IL Development and Use. A revised version of a paper at the Applied Linguistics Academic Session, Annual TESOL Conference, Miami.